

Romans 1:16-32

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16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

Comments on Romans 1:16-32

v. 16 - Two assertions.

1. The complete efficacy of the gospel to salvation. (Calvinism?)

2. The extent of this efficacy shall reach unto all who believe and obey without distinction.

v. 17 - In the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God. Rom. 10:3. He refers to God's system of making man (declaring man) to be righteous. "A righteousness of God by faith is revealed in order to faith." It is based on faith and addressed to faith; it is a way that starts from faith and ends in faith.

GOSPEL

The power – God did not give us power to fulfill the law – Christ fulfilled it for us. Matt. 5:17-18; Rom. 8:3-4.

LAW

Legal weakness.

of God – Phil. 3:9

Human righteousness. 10:1-3;

Unto Salvation

Legal condemnation. 7:9-10.

To Everyone  
10:11-13.

Jewish exclusiveness. 3:21- 23;

That believeth

Legal works. 9:30-32; 10:3-5.

Probes to the heart of all hesitancy, all cowardly silences, all the secular compromises that mark our discipleship.

What could an obscure provincial bring to the capital of the world, especially about a carpenter who died with thieves.

The ideas of right and wrong among the Hebrews are forensic ideas, that is, they always think of the right and the wrong as if they were to be settled before a judge. Righteousness is to the Hebrew not so much a moral quality as a legal status. The word "righteous" means simply "in the right"; the word "wicked" means "in the wrong." Exod. 9:27

God is himself righteous, as are those who are “in the right” in relation to God and his law.

The gospel tells us first how men and women, sinners as they are, can come to be “in the right” with God, and second, how God’s personal righteousness is vindicated in the very act of declaring sinful men and women “righteous.

v. 16 - Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. This is a figure of speech called litotes (understatement, cf. hyperbole) – he means that he glories in the gospel (Gal. 6:14). It is the power of God unto salvation.

v. 17 - For in it the righteousness of God is revealed. He who through faith is righteous shall live. These words have already been quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:11 to prove that it is not by the law that people are justified before God. They appear again in Heb. 10:38 to encourage the readers to press on and not lose heart. Habakkuk, crying out to God against the oppression under which his people groaned received the divine assurance that wickedness would not triumph indefinitely, that righteousness would ultimately be vindicated, and the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Hab. 2:14.

SIN AND RETRIBUTION: THE  
UNIVERSAL NEED DIAGNOSED.  
1:18 – 3:20.

THE PAGAN WORLD. 1:18-32.

Before Paul can tell us about the new age he must make clear what the old age is. What righteousness from God is he can make clear only by first pointing out the wrath of God that rests on all where “righteousness from God” is not found.

To begin with it may be said that, in general, the wrath of God is the same as his holy displeasure at sin. To Paul the wrath of God is a terrifying reality. “God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap.” Gal. 6:7. As long as God is God He cannot behold with indifference that His creation is destroyed and His holy will trodden underfoot. Just as the righteousness from God means the whole situation that exists where man is in right relation with God, so the wrath of God signifies the total situation that obtains, the lost condition, where man has departed from God.

Before Paul elaborates the manner in which God's way of righteousness is set forth in the gospel, he shows why it is so urgently necessary that the way to get right with God should be known. As things are, human beings are "in the wrong" with God, and his wrath is revealed against them. There is moral law in life that men and women are left to the consequences of their own freely chosen course of action, and unless this tendency is reversed by divine grace, their situation will go from bad to worse. Three times over the words of doom recur: "God gave them up" (vv. 24, 26, 28).

Paul's aim is to show that the whole of humanity is morally bankrupt, unable to claim a favorable verdict at the judgment bar of God, desperately in need of mercy and pardon.

He begins with an area of human life whose moral bankruptcy was a matter of general agreement among moralists of the day – the great mass of contemporary paganism. The picture that he draws of it is ugly, but no uglier than the picture that we get of it from contemporary pagan literature. What is the cause of this, Paul asks, of this appalling condition that has developed in the world? Whence come these shameful perversions and enmity within the human family? It all arises, he says, from wrong ideas about God. And these wrong ideas about God did not arise innocently; the knowledge of the true God was accessible but men and women closed their minds to it. Instead of appreciating the glory of the Creator by contemplating the universe that he created, they gave to created things that glory that belongs to God alone. Idolatry is the source of immorality.

The first thing that Paul has to affirm is that the wrath of God is revealed against unrighteousness. Though Paul does not say expressly that he here speaks of the Gentiles, the context makes that fact clear. But how can God let his wrath fall on those who do not know him? But Paul asserts that it was not because of lack of divine revelation that men forsook God – what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Though God is invisible, man can know Him, for He has not left himself without witness. Ever since the creation of the world He has revealed His eternal power and deity. He had made himself known in His works. God has made Himself known so that they may be without excuse. V. 20. [NOTE: Paul says the same thing about the

law in 3:19 – that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.]

Their idolatry was deliberate ignorance. They did not see fit to have the knowledge of God. v. 28. The truth was available to them, but they suppressed it unrighteously and embraced the “lie” in preference to it. Therefore, God gave them up to the consequences of their choice. And precisely here he has manifested his wrath – that principle of retribution that must operate in a moral universe.

To a man so convinced that the world was created and controlled by a personal God of righteousness and mercy, this retribution could not be an impersonal principle; it was God’s own wrath.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.

v.18 - Wrath is legal, not emotional. Proof? Had his wrath been emotional as man's he would not have wanted to save anyone from it. Some argue that the word “wrath” is scarcely suitable to be used in relation to God, probably because the wrath we know in human life so constantly involves sinful self-regarding passion. Not so with God: his “wrath” is the response of his holiness to wickedness and rebellion.

Thus, the wrath of God is revealed. This certainly includes the final wrath of God, but it is revealed in life against those who by their wickedness suppress the truth – God gave them up.

19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it [himself] to them.

v.19 - Noah (common ancestor), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: Egypt through miracles. Ex. 9:16; Josh. 2:10-14; Jonah; Israel in Assyria; Judah in Babylon.

20 Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse;

v.20 – Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 14:17.

21 for although they knew [knowing God, ASV] God they did not honor [glorify] him as God or give thanks to him, but they

v.21 - Result of cutting off the source of light.

became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.

22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. 29 They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

v. 22 – What a contrast between the claim and the reality. Character is of those who deny God a place in his own creation. But men cannot remain in a state of negation - he will worship something.

v.24 - Dishonored 1. God; 2. Their own bodies; 3. Others.

Whatever we may do.

It is clear that Paul is censuring the willful practice of homosexuality or sodomy. Scripture does not make light of this vice. It does not refer to it as an alternate lifestyle. In Lev. 20:13 the death penalty is pronounced upon its perpetrators. For more information on this horrible evil read Gen. 19:4-9; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17-18; Judg. 19:22-24; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Isa. 3:9; Lam. 4:6; and see also 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:19; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7.

v. 28 - again states the reason for and the result of the corruption, and for the third and last time focuses our attention on the correlation between man's rejection of God and God's rejection of man. Man's arrogance comes to the fore in the expression "they did not deem it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God." Without God, man always travels in one direction.

1. wickedness - unrighteousness in general.
2. evil - evil nature, delight in evil, malignity, malevolence, the wicked act of the mind.
3. covetousness - a having more; the will to have more.
4. malice - badness; evil habit flowing from wickedness; the act rather than the desire.
5. envy - jealousy of another's success; depreciation of his excellence; very similar to word for murder.
6. murder - a killing of man.
7. strife - strife, quarrel, contention.
8. deceit - a bait, hence, the adulteration of the truth to catch or

deceive.

9. malignity – disposed to evil, the desire of evil to others, spitefulness. Lit., bad manner; hence, an evil disposition that tends to put the worst construction on everything.

10. gossips - slanderer.

11. slanderers - a speaking against, open evil speaking as opposed to whispering.

12. haters of God - hateful to God. ASV.

13. insolent - outrageous personal insults, a wanton insolent man.

14. haughty - appearing over, conspicuous above other persons or things; hence, of persons, haughty, arrogant.

15. boastful - a wanderer about the country, vagabond; hence, a false pretender, imposter, quack.

16. inventors of evil - inventor, contrives new ways to practice evil.

17. disobedient to parents - unwilling to be persuaded, refusing belief and obedience; contumacious.

18. foolish - void of understanding, dull of apprehension, foolish.

19. faithless - refusing to abide by covenants made; faithless.

20. heartless - esp. love of parent-child and child-parent.

21. ruthless - without libation, league, or compact; without treaty; one who cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant.

22. without libation, league, or compact; without treaty. One who cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant.

23. Not actively compassionate, not desirous of relieving the ills of others, not applying beneficent aid; then, uncompassionate, cruel.

32 Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

v. 32 – the perpetrators of the crime must not be thought of as so innocent that they cannot tell the difference between right and wrong. On the contrary, they know – have an awareness of the fact – that according to God's ordinance, his decree, those who practice such vices are worthy of death.

How do they know it? They know it because a holy and righteous God has revealed Himself to them in nature (1:21) and in conscience (2:14-15). Accordingly they sense the fact that God will call them to account, and that continuing in their evil way will result in perdition for them. Nevertheless, in spite of this awareness, they not only continue to practice these vices but even applaud others who do the same.